Court Data Give Peak At Hughes' Empire

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LOS ANGELES, Aug. 21 (AP)—Documents filed in U.S. District Court here purport to show how billionaire Howard Hughes' Nevada holdings are operated, including cash political contributions totaling 385,000, the Los Angeles Herald-Examiner says.

The newspaper said the disclosures were made in briefs, affidavits and depositions filed in a $17.5 million libel suit brought against Hughes by Robert Maheu, who formerly bossed the Nevada empire.

Maheu was fired as head of Hughes' gambling resort operations in December, 1970, after the billionaire secretly left Las Vegas.

The suit was filed in March, 1971, after a voice identified as Hughes said in a telephone news conference that Maheu "stole me blind."

At that time Maheu said he had operated honestly and that he had been deposed in an internal power play.

The suit is scheduled for trial Oct. 23. Hughes reportedly now lives in London.

The Herald-Examiner said its examination of the documents disclosed these allegations by the opposing sides.

- A total of $385,000 was taken in 1969 from Hughes' personal account at the Silver Slipper casino in Las Vegas and was distributed to about 80 political candidates, including Nevada's current lieutenant governor.
- Hughes wanted to keep the payments secret so that he would not be "involved in an extortion game where one knew what the other was getting."
- A private investigation by Hughes produced 525 reports alleging kickbacks, skimming and underworld infiltration of Hughes-owned casinos.
- Hughes personally told Maheu on three occasions to keep his income a secret so that executives of Hughes Tool Co., now Summa Corp., would not be jealous.

The Herald-Examiner said the political contributions were disclosed when attorneys took depositions from Thomas G. Bell, a Nevada lawyer who did special legal work for Hughes, and Jack Hooper, Hughes' security chief in 1969.